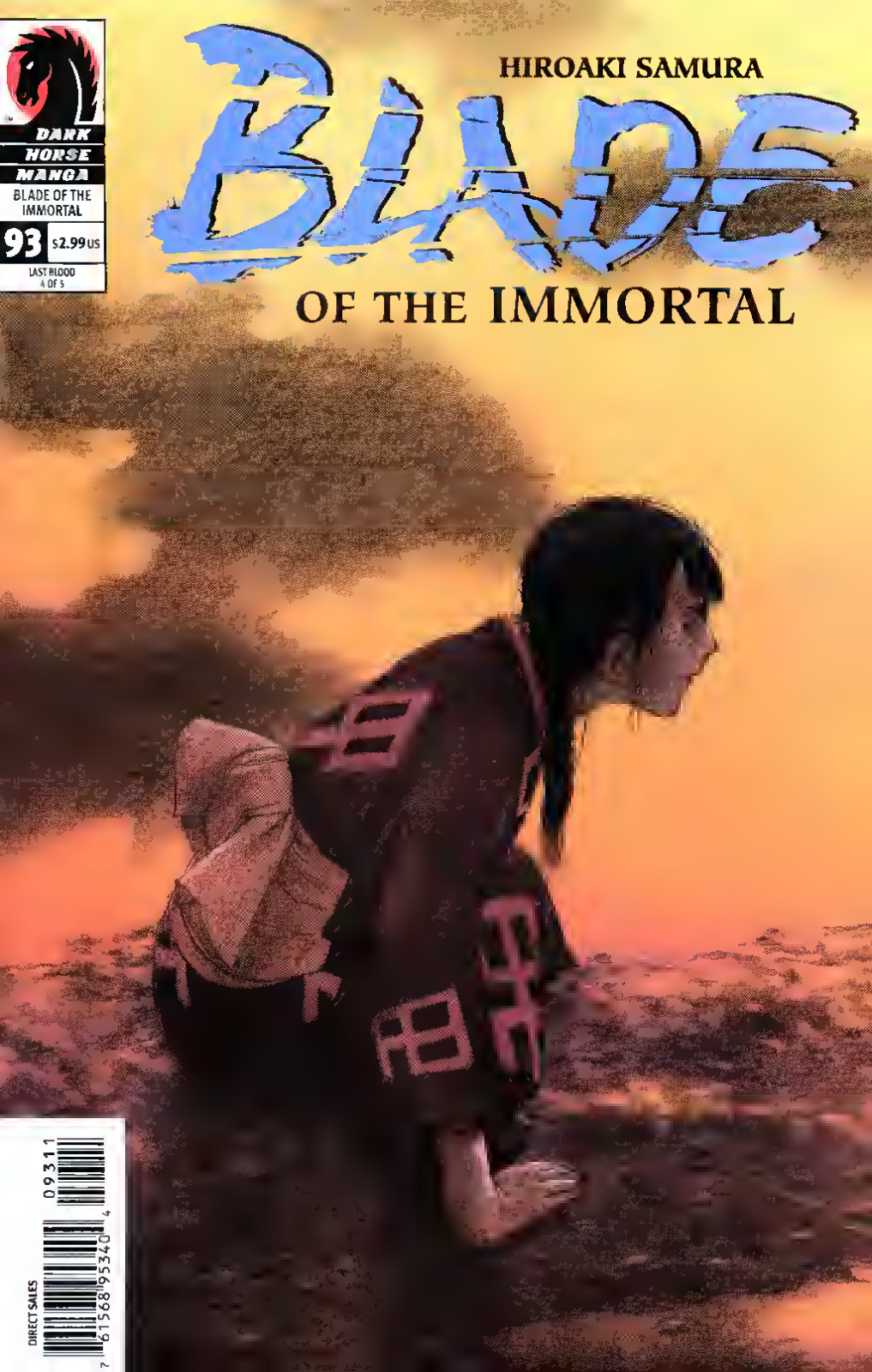
DARK HORSE MANGA
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
93
$2.99 US
LAST BLOOD 4 OF 5
HIROAKI SAMURA
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OF THE IMMORTAL
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by
HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by
DANA LEWIS and TOREN SMITH

lettering and retouch by
TOMOKO SAITO

cover colors by
DAN JACKSON

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI
Immortal *rōnin* vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge

RIN
Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* destroyed by the Itto-*ryū*. seeks Anotsu's death

ANOTSU
The leader of the Itto-*ryū* sword school

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Anotsu and Rin are both caught and threatened by a group of vengeful Shingyoto-*ryū* students ... until three deadly warriors, Magatsu, Makie, and Manji, arrive! Splintered into three groups, Makie decimates most of the students, finally facing off against the headstrong Iriya. Nearby, Magatsu and Manji cross swords with the few remaining Shingyōtō-*ryū* swordsmen left alive.

designer **DEBRA BAILEY** editor **PHILIP SIMON** publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

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.....
HOLY...
DAMMIT...!
ALL THAT KILLING...
...AND NOT A SINGLE BLOOD STAIN... HOW DOES SHE MOVE LIKE THAT?!
.....
.....

.....
PATIENCE ...!
ONE STEP...
ANOTHER...

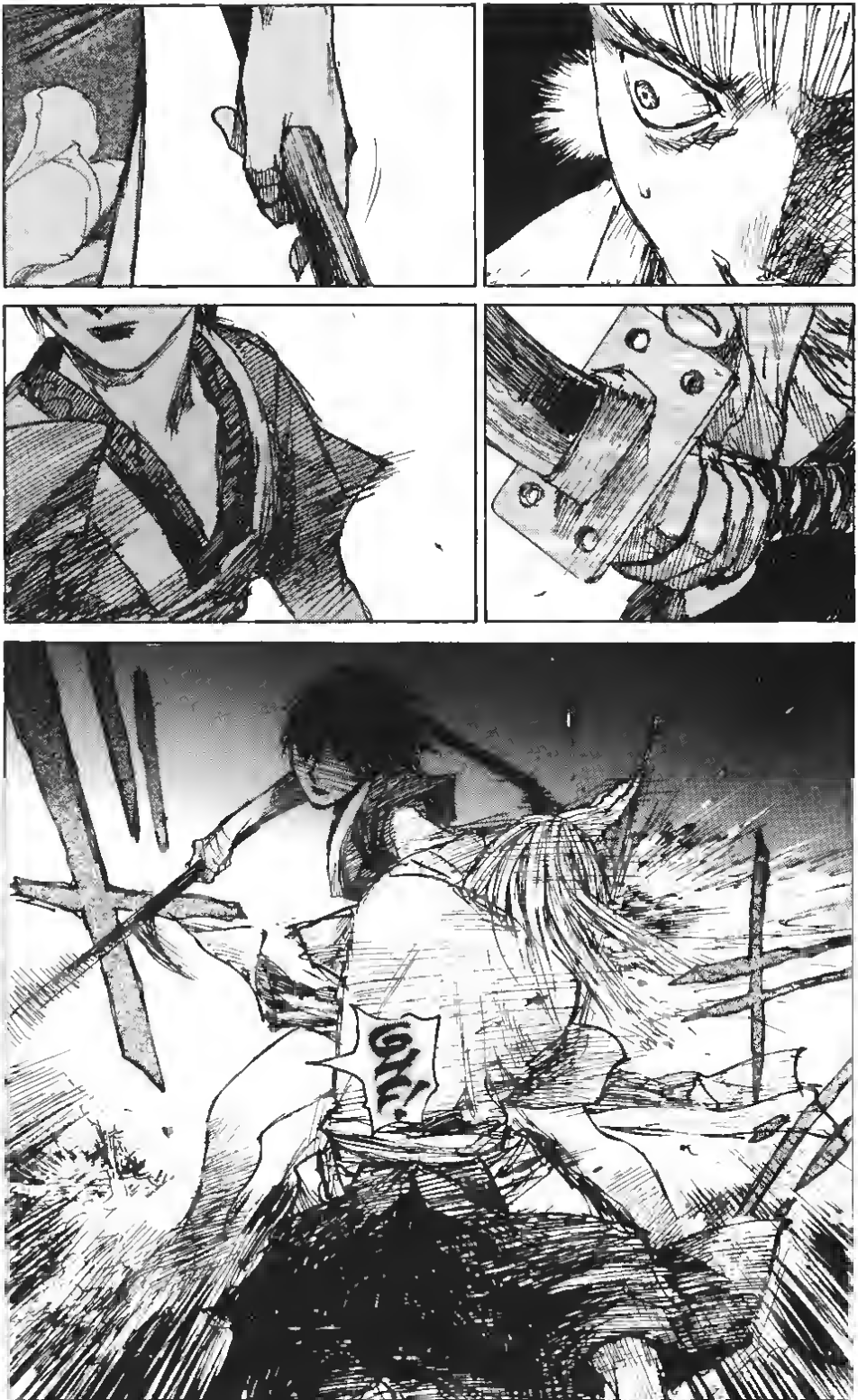
STEP BY STEP, CLOSE ON HER.
UNTIL THE INSTANT BEFORE SHE STRIKES!

OKAY, BABE... GO FOR IT!
AND WHEN SHE DOES...

SHE'LL KICK, BUT NO PROB. FOR THEM, IT WAS...
...BUT NOT FOR ME.

...SOAK UP THE BLOW!
TAKE IT FULL ON AND STOP IT!

REBOUND! ONE STROKE!


UH!

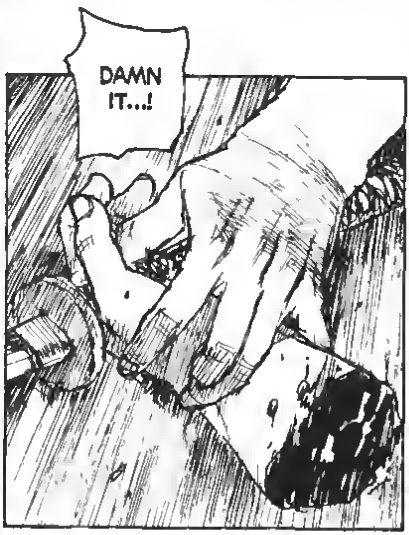
HAA!
!!
THAP
THAP

GOT YOU!!
WHAT
WHA--?!
SNAK
KT

GKU
AH...?!
NNG...
AUGH!

.....
IN... IN*SANE*...
S-STOPPING BLADE... ON *THIGH*? NOT *LOOKING* ...?!
I-IF IT WAS *UPRIGHT*... YOU'D HAVE BEEN...
WHEN STRIKING INTO A CHEST FROM BEHIND, THE BLADE SHOULD BE *HORIZONTAL*...
...OR THE RIBCAGE ABSORBS THE BLOW AND SPARES THE VITAL ORGANS. YOU ARE SKILLED... YOU WOULD KNOW THIS.

!
SNAP!
HAH!
SNICK


DAMN IT...!

GOD DAMN IT!!

!!
THAP

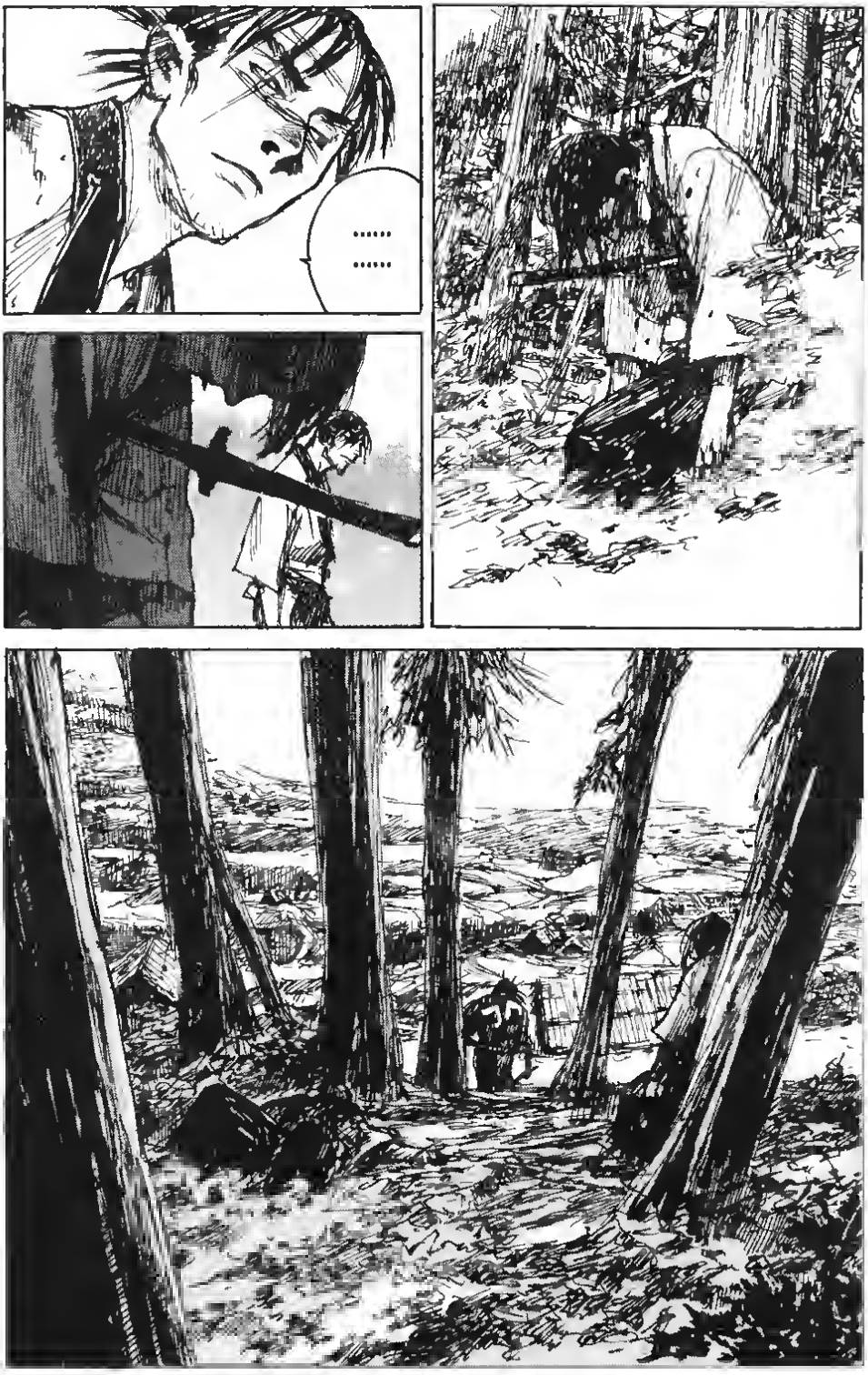
無限の住人

LAST BLOOD

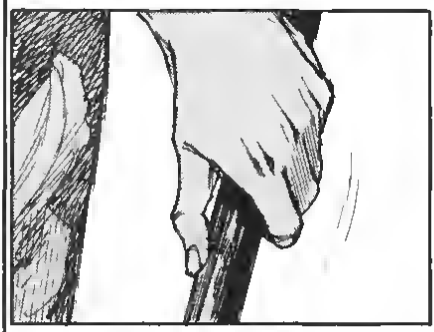
-part four-

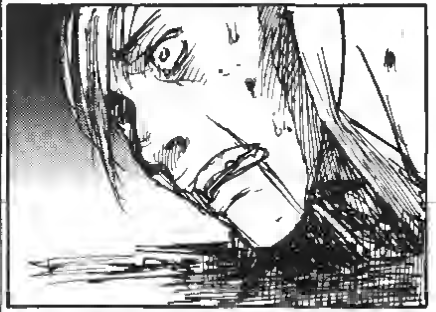
I'M A MOUNTAIN BOY, SEE?
IT'S EASY, TRICKING DŌJŌ KIDS LIKE YOU ONTO THIS FOOTING.
SORRY, GUYS.

BUT YOU WERE GOOD, YOU TWO.
DAMNED GOOD.
REST IN PEACE.



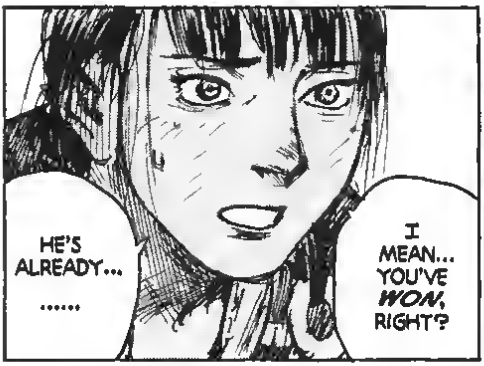
AHH...
AAH!
UNG...
UU
AAGH!



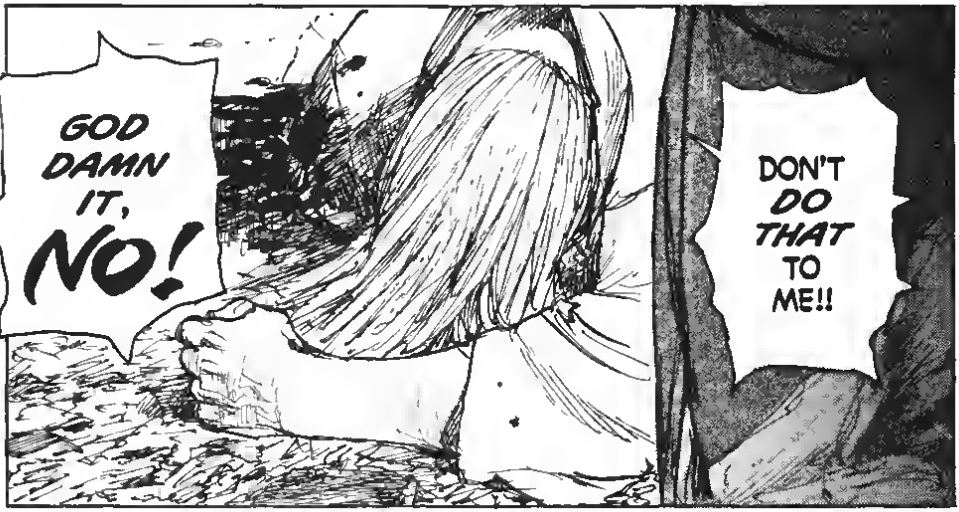


AW, SHIT!

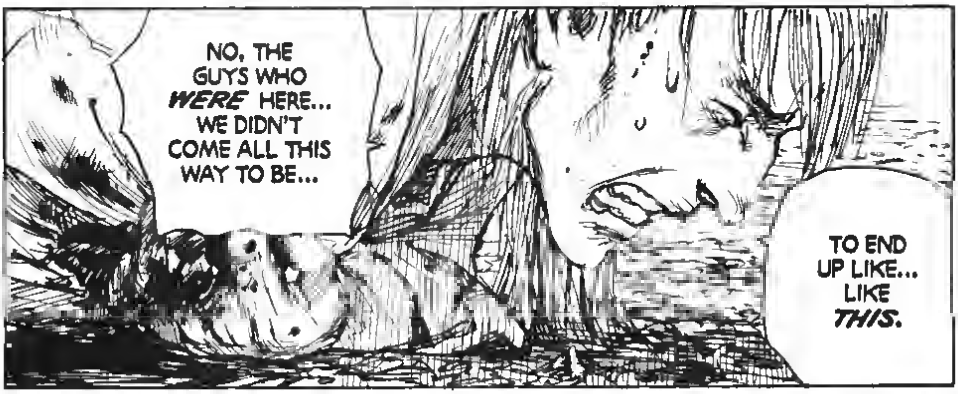
MAKIE-SAN!!


HE'S ALREADY... .....
I MEAN... YOU'VE *WON*, RIGHT?

NO...


GOD DAMN IT, *NO!*
DON'T *DO THAT* TO ME!!

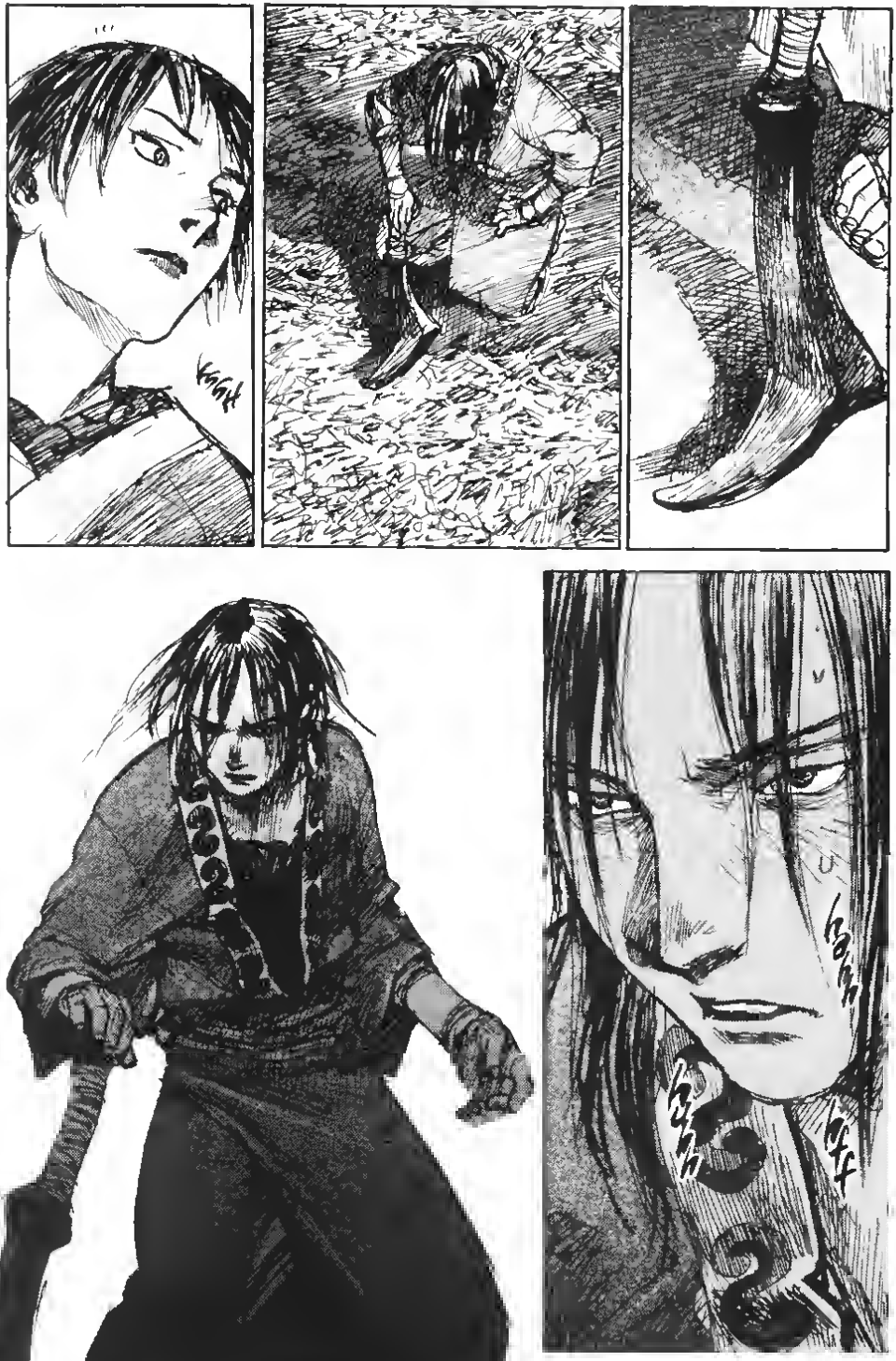
TH-
THE
GUY
HERE...


NO, THE GUYS WHO *WERE* HERE... WE DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY TO BE...
TO END UP LIKE... LIKE *THIS.*

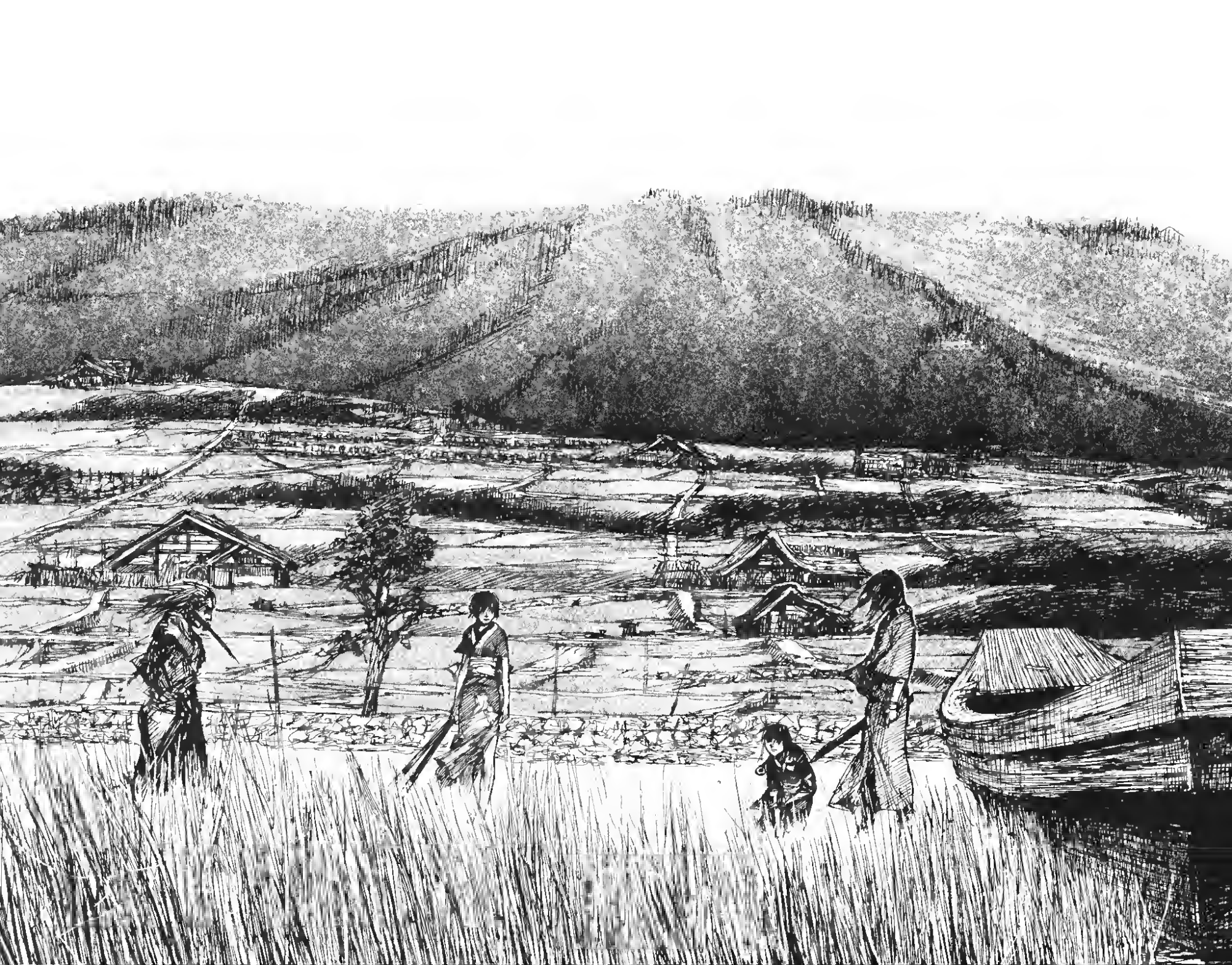
HIM! WE WERE AFTER *HIM.*
ANOTSU KAGEHISA!

W-WE... LEFT THE DŌJŌ GATE, READY NEVER TO RETURN.
I'M NOT AFRAID TO DIE... NO. ABSOLUTELY NOT...
ONLY... NOT BY YOU!
I DIDN'T COME HERE TO BE KILLED BY YOU!
LET ME FIGHT HIM!!
WO-WO
GIVE ME MY SHOW-DOWN WITH HIM!!

Y-YES...WE DREW AGAINST YOU FIRST. I APOLOGIZE! I SEE NOW THAT YOU'RE BETTER THAN ANY OF US...
BUT YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH? RIGHT?
I BEG YOU!
LET ME FIGHT THAT GUY... ONE MORE TIME!



ANOTSU KAGEHISA!
!
FWAP
HMPH...
PATHETIC. BUT USE IT!
IT'S YOURS, ANY-WAY...



TO BE CONTINUED...!

LETTERS

send letters to:

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www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com

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GLOSSARY

dojō: a school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts, here, a training center for swordsmanship.

hara-kiri: ritual suicide by disembowelment.

Ittō-ryū: the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

ryū: a sword school.

Shingyōtō-*ryu*: a *dojo* which celebrated older, harsher traditions of combat training, recently led by Ibane Kensui, who committed *hara-kiri*.

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* — 'he is") As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the *swastika* was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counterclockwise direction, and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the *swastika* has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork. The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally, all of our manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the unretouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

NEXT MONTH:
Last Blood, Part Five

Hiroaki Samura's riveting *Last Blood* story line comes to its conclusion! With revenge-lust hanging thick in the air, our main event is the deadly showdown between the starving and weakened Anotsu and his crazed, injured Shingyōtō-*ryū* opponent, Iriya. Makie has evened out the playing field in a bloody flurry, while Manji and Magatsu try to survive separate dogfights with Shingyōtō-*ryū* swordsmen on the sidelines. Manji battles in order to be reunited with his beloved Rin, Magatsu engages his opponent in order to defend Anotsu, and any survivors of these gory encounters will face each other! This issue's dramatic cover mirrors the intensity inside, as Samura continues to reinvent the bushidō grudge match with a sharp, modern edge.

Team DCP